

EL SALVADOR

I HAVE
WITNESSED THE AFFLICTION
OF MY PEOPLE... I KNOW
THEY ARE SUFFER-
ING



LILLIAN BRULC

COSCA

jan/feb 1990

xia pacis



On February 17, the tenth anniversary of Archbishop Oscar Romero's letter to then - President Jimmy Carter calling for an end to U.S. aid to El Salvador, there will be a march and rally to reiterate that demand. We will gather at downtown churches in Des Moines: St. Ambrose Cathedral (6th & High), St. John's Lutheran (6th & Keo), St. Paul's Episcopal (8th & High), First Baptist (620 8th), and First United Methodist (10th & Pleasant) at 1:00 pm. We will then march to the Federal Building to rally at 2:00 pm. PLEASE COME TO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR THE PEOPLE OF EL SALVADOR!!! Contact us here at the Catholic Worker for more information, or to find out how you can help.



EL SALVADOR DEDICATION

For years now the horrible happenings in El Salvador have been drifting into our lives. Here in Des Moines the stories of suffering, injustice, and monstrous killings have moved many hearts. The last ten years have been a recorded trail of blood that leads not only to the White House and Congress, but to taxpayers as well.

Every once in a while we here at the CW look up from our work and try to figure out why some of the people we try to help are in the situations they are in. Why is the single woman with two babies living in an apartment with no electricity, or front door, and the blue sky shining in? I just got interrupted from writing this article to talk to a man on the phone who couldn't find a food program that would give him food today, what were his two kids going to eat today? It's hard to look at the figure of 1.5 million dollars a day that is spent to kill innocent people and not feel anger, frustration, and the need to pull up our sleeves and get busy.

This year, starting on the day Congress went into session, we here at the Des Moines Catholic Worker join a national effort of people, groups, and other communities to force the hands of our elected representatives and senators to stop giving this money to tyrants who kill, torture, and enslave in the name of freedom, democracy, in the name of the US government.

Catholic Workers aren't particularly known for hassling Congressmen or organizing letter writing campaigns. We work with and live with people who suffer the injustices of our society, and we tried to find a way to "be" with the people of El Salvador. And we felt the best way was through prayer and fasting.

There are four people in our community that are fasting and have been fasting for 8 days now. Theirs is a very personal gift. I'm sure that some people may look at fasting as some kind of tool of coercion, but the way I see it, fasting and praying puts you on the same plane as so many people who are suffering and praying all over the world. I remember when I was in labor with my first child I suddenly thought of all the women who were at that very moment in prayer and in labor, all of us, universally, especially in times of suffering and sacrifice are under the care of the Goddess.

As we were discussing the urgency of the situation in El Salvador we also couldn't ignore the need for reaching the people who also know about and feel strongly about these atrocities but don't often write Washington, or go to demonstrations. We really need these people to come out and join us.

February 17 will be the 11th anniversary of Bishop Romero's letter to then-President Carter, pleading for an end to military aid

to El Salvador. Oscar Romero had many friends who were a part of the power elite and was considered an ally of the government when he first became Archbishop. There came a time for him and I think there comes a point for all of us that suffering and killing can no longer be ignored. Anyone who reads the papers or catches the network news should be asking themselves why a country who operates death squads that kill priests and civilians gets so much US aid.

We really feel this is the time for everyone who wants a change in US policies to join voices so that our elected officials finally hear that we want a change now. We want to ask everyone who wants to see our government end years of repression in El Salvador to come to the Federal Building February 17 at 2:00 in the afternoon.

We dedicate this entire issue of Via Pacis to the people of El Salvador and we dedicate ourselves as fully as we possibly can for the next two weeks to the Salvadorans who have died. I want to not only remind people of the Americans and church people who have died, but to think of the thousands of children, mothers, fathers and grandparents who have died. And I pray that finally the bloody history of El Salvador will change.

Kay Meyer

URGENT!

Congress reconvened on January 23. There are bills in Congress which desperately need your support. In the Senate the Kerry Bill calls for a permanent end to military aid and an end to all aid to El Salvador until set conditions regarding human rights are met. In the House of Representatives, HR 3733, sponsored by Ron Dellums, among others, calls for an end to aid except that which is serving humanitarian needs of that country. We strongly urge you to contact your Congressional representatives in support of this legislation which may finally bring long absent peace, justice and democracy to El Salvador.

Senator Charles Grassley
135 Hart Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510
(202)224-3744
(515)284-4890

Congressman Neal Smith
2373 Rayburn Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515
(202)225-4426
(515)284-4634

Senator Tom Harkin
317 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
(202)224-3254
(515)284-4574



U.S. AID TO EL SALVADOR



litany for el salvador

from demonstrations at the
Los Angeles Federal Building

The oppression of the people of Salvador is a long litany of blood, injustice and oppression. Our role as North Americans in this litany can no longer be ignored.

In March of 1977, Jesuit Rutilio Grande and two others are assassinated by gunmen.

MADE IN THE USA.

Right-wing groups circulate flyers saying "Be a Patriot! Kill a Priest! Religious workers are tortured, killed or deported.

MADE IN THE USA.

In 1980, the United States sends El Salvador 52.3 million in assistance.

MADE IN THE USA.

In March of 1980 Archbishop Oscar Romero is assassinated while saying mass.

MADE IN THE USA.

In December of 1980, North American Churchwomen Dorothy Kazel, Ita Ford, Jean Donovan and Maura Clarke are raped and killed by death squads.

MADE IN THE USA.

In 1984, the United States sends El Salvador \$438 million in assistance.

MADE IN THE USA.

In July of 1984, Army troops massacre 68 noncombatants in the village of Los Llanitos. Half of the dead are children.

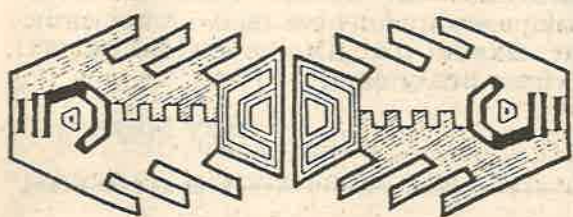
MADE IN THE USA.

In 1987, the United States sends El Salvador \$369.8 million in assistance.

MADE IN THE USA.

In October of 1987, a right-wing death squad assassinates human rights activist Herbert Anaya in front of his family.

MADE IN THE USA.



REFLECTIONS

By Dennis McLaughlin

I was recently informed that Julio (my sponsor child) is serving his required time in the military. In Guatemala, serving in the military means that a boy may be required to sell his soul before he can become a man. I'd like to imagine that the military in Guatemala is the army of the people. But I know differently. Having just finished reading the book *BITTER FRUIT*, I know that not since the American coup in Guatemala in 1954 has there been any semblance of a people's army.

America's "Operation Success" set the stage for right wing paramilitary groups to commence operations. Students, intellectuals, trade unionists, and professionals who sought to organize or protest what they considered social injustice were among those first targeted by the death squads. Amnesty International has documented that death squad activity steadily increased to the point that between

After 10 years of civil war, over 60,000 Salvadorans lie dead.

MADE IN THE USA.

Twelve years, 70,000 dead and 1.5 million displaced people later, there is still no peace.

The horrors of previous years of war have been repeated again.

On October 31, the offices of FENASTRAS, the labor union federation, are bombed, and nine people, including leader Febe Velasquez, are killed.

MADE IN THE USA.

On the same day, the office of COMADRES, an organization of mothers and families of the disappeared, is bombed.

MADE IN THE USA.

On September 11, in response to the FMLN offensive, Salvadoran armed forces begin bombing and mortaring civilian neighborhoods.

MADE IN THE USA.

On September 12, the army invades the National University and destroys the Medical School with 105 Millimeter rockets.

MADE IN THE USA.

On the same day, Norma Guirola de Herrera, human rights worker for the Institute for the Advancement of Women, is assassinated in her home.

MADE IN THE USA.

On November 14, the government declares a 24 hour curfew on occupied areas. The injured and hungry cannot leave because of indiscriminate machine-gun fire.

MADE IN THE USA.

On November 15, the Salvadoran army refuses to let the Red Cross evacuate the wounded.

MADE IN THE USA.

1966 and 1981 more than 30,000 people were abducted, tortured and assassinated.

Made in the USA, the seeds of genocide so arrogantly sown during the Eisenhower administration continue to be as ignorantly nurtured today. It takes time for history to extract the truth about covert operations but time has revealed the blatantly obvious to anyone desiring to look. America's involvement in the carnage has been instrumental and substantial.

My understanding of history brings me to a deep feeling of shame. I'll never forget the uncanny feeling I had while walking the crowded streets of Guatemala City near the National Police Headquarters. The reign of terror which 'protected' me was like an eerie blanket of doom.

For the sake of analogy, Central America is our Eastern Europe.

One of my interests is in the Marian apparitions, reading books about Guadalupe or Jacinta, "The Little Flower of Fatima."

Lucia Santos, one of the three children at Fatima, revealed certain prophecies including a revelation that "Russia would spread her errors throughout the world." In 1917, Russia was a country barely able to feed itself, on the brink of famine and third from the bottom in literacy. The inclusion of Russia in the prophecies seemed pretty farfetched. That "in the end Russia would be converted"? Russia in 1917 was considered a religious state.



On November 16, six Jesuit priests and women are tortured and murdered in a dawn raid by 30 men in army uniforms.

MADE IN THE USA.

On the same day, Roman Catholic Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Bishop Gregorio Rosa-Chavez, Lutheran Bishop Medaro Gomez face death threats.

MADE IN THE USA.

On the same day, Treasury Police offices of UNTS, the largest federal popular organizations.

MADE IN THE USA.

On November 17, Santa Maria de los is bombed, its orphanage is destroyed, pastor Daniel Sanchez is detained, National Guard.

MADE IN THE USA.

On the same day, Salvadoran Army General Francisco Eduardo C. advises Catholic bishops to leave "for their own safety." in a thinly-veiled death threat.

MADE IN THE USA.

On the same day, Salvadoran Armed Forces deny bombing the civilian population.

MADE IN THE USA.

On November 19, Episcopal churchman Juan Antonio Berti Quinonez is captured by security forces. Six international Episcopal workers are detained.

MADE IN THE USA.

On November 20, the National Guard desecrates and closes Zacamil church.

MADE IN THE USA.

On the same day, the United States Congress reaffirms \$85,000,000 in aid to El Salvador.

MADE IN THE USA.

A present day apparition is taking place in Medjugorje, Yugoslavia. Unlike any other apparitions is the frequency (daily) duration (since 1981) of Mary's appearance to six young people aged 10-19 (in 1981). What I'm gathering from it is primarily an advent call to repentance. Indeed, the first appearance was June 24, 1981, the feast day of John the Baptist. And the call to peace through prayer and fasting, and gospel messages. One, perhaps unusual message, reaffirms the Fatima prophecy that Russia will be converted but adding "the West has lost God." Somehow it is not difficult for me to fathom. But could it be? The tables are turned and are the disseminators of false ideals? Perhaps we should take seriously the call to Prayer and Fasting. We could reintroduce the prayer for Russia which was used to say at the end of Mass. Perhaps ourselves as the focus of the prayer. We pray the rosary daily for the conversion of the US.

I fear that as long as we do not directly face the bitter fruits of our "policies," there will be a general feeling of apathy. My hope is not lie in the political process so much as rests in the prayers of the oppressed, and pray for us and the monster we are in danger of becoming.



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SALVADORAN COFFEE BOYCOTT: would you change brands to save lives?

After two years of study and evaluation, including trips to El Salvador which discovered enthusiastic support from Salvador's unions of coffee pickers and coffee workers, Neighbor-to-Neighbor in San Francisco has announced a public boycott of Salvadoran coffee. The boycott is a strategy for ending the Salvadoran government's war against its poor.

About half the money the Salvadoran government spends comes from coffee sales. (The other half is US financial aid to El Salvador -- \$1.5 million per day). Some 60% of Salvadoran coffee is sold to US companies. Simply by changing brands to avoid Salvadoran coffee blends, US citizens can 'vote' to cut off funds El Salvador uses to continue the war. Neighbor-to-Neighbor has already communicated with national and international coffee companies to explain the boycott to them, and request they avoid Salvadoran coffee. There is blood in our coffee. Don't buy:

Maxwell House	(General Foods)
Hills Brothers	(Nestle's)
Folger's	(Proctor & Gamble)
Chase & Sanborn	(Nestle's)
Taster's Choice	(Nestle's)



letter from the war zone

By Dorothy Marie Hennessey, OSF, of Dubuque, Iowa, whose brother Ron Hennessey is a Maryknoller presently serving in El Salvador.

year. Yet I have heard and read much about Cristo Salvador parish.

As I write this, a petite young Ursuline sister, Diana Ortiz, is in our home. I hesitate to give her an abrazo, knowing she has the scars of a hundred cigarette burns on her back, as well as the psychological scars of a sexual mauling; all by her kidnappers in Guatemala.

Diana's ordeal is one small part of the persecution of the church in Central America.

In El Salvador more than 40 churches have been searched in the past few months. The pretext: "weapons." The church of Cristo Salvador in Zacamil, San Salvador, is co-pastored by Maryknoll Fathers Ron Hennessey and Bill Schmidt. It was ransacked, looted, and shot up with automatic weapons in November. "They took the speaker system," says Bill, "dumped out the files; they stole the eucharist, the gold box where we keep the wafers; they took the vestments, two chalices, and shot up the walls," he says. "They removed pictures from the walls and shot holes in their faces." These were pictures of Romero, killed in 1980; Octavio Ortiz, killed in 1979; Sister Silvia, killed in 1981; Alfonso Acevedo, murdered in 1983; pictures of the four American churchwomen raped and murdered by the death squads. F.A.E.S., the government army's initials, were scrawled on the wall.

Outside they hung a sign: "This church is mined." Despite that, 60 people attended Mass in the devastated church the next Sunday. (Now the attendance is down to about 20.)

I have not spoken to my brother, Ron, since he was home in June for his Silver Jubilee. He has not sent out a letter for nearly a

"More martyrs have been made in Central America in the last 10 years than in the first two centuries of Christianity," says Dominican Father Jim Barnett, recently ousted by death threats from his San Salvador parish. He spoke in Sinsinawa, Wisconsin last week. "I had no goodbye time," he said. "There was no Eucharist yesterday in my parish, no sharing of the Word, no day care center, no youth singing." The leaders had all been deported or imprisoned.

US training and US money went to kill the Jesuits, he says. At the funeral of the six priests and their two employees he saw "my old friend Ron Hennessey and went to give him a big abrazo." "How are you, Ron; how is everything going?"

And Ron started to cry! In all my life, I've never seen Ron cry. But he had just seen the ransacked church. And he remembered especially one of the slain Jesuits, Martin-Baro.

There had been tension with Martin-Baro when Ron and Bill moved into Christ Savior four years ago. The Maryknollers had not worked in El Salvador for a number of years, and no one knew how risky the assignment would be. (Ron, with his sense of humor, wondered if his superiors thought, "We won't lose too much if we send this guy!") In 1980 the "death squad or the military had put a bomb in the church and blown it up." The Belgian priests then moved out, and the church had no resident priest till Ron and Bill came. The Archbishop had been worried that the Catholics would be isolated from the hierarchial church. There had not been



THE REPRESSION

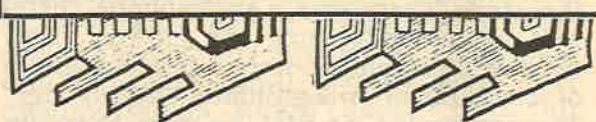
By Carla Dawson

"STOP! THE REPRESSION"

Those words really hit my heart, on December 8. A group of us made a personal statement to our President of our dissatisfaction and discontent with our government's aid to El Salvador. Once again the words "Stop! the repression" hit home when four of our community members decided to fast for twenty-five days to show our support to the people of El Salvador, and to show that there is still hope and not all Americans are proud of our government's action or lack of action.

I as an individual am really torn as to what I can do to stop the worthless killing, torture, jailings, and disappearances of the Salvadoran people. So when we were discussing fasting, it was like the light in my heart started glowing ever so strong, and peace came into me. And I had an answer to what I as a person could do. This is by no means the limit one person can take to stop our government from doing this evil. But for me it is a starting point that needed to be taken. So here I am, 8 days into the fast and my spirit is high and my heart happy.

So as one person to another, the next time you watch TV, listen to the radio, read the newspaper and hear about the terrible things that are happening in El Salvador, remember there is something you can do to stop the bloodshed. And that if enough individuals do something about it, maybe soon our government will take notice and heed the words "Stop! the repression."



outreach to the traditional Catholics who didn't belong to the basic Christian communities. Soon the suspicious military had killed more than 600 parishioners.

According to Tim McCarthy of NCR, it was Jesuit Martin-Baro who was afraid in 1986 that the new priests would ruin the successful basic communities. The tension had long been broken -- but now Martin-Baro was dead -- brutally murdered. He had said, a few months before, "We have learned to expect death, even abnormal, extraordinary death." I can see why Ron wept.

Bill, the young priest, remembered a retreat he had made with an older S.J. on how hard it was to be a priest in El Salvador -- guerrillas pulling from one side, government from the others, the awful poverty of the people. The rich so powerful, the many unemployed. "What would Christ say about this? How do we deal with the wounded?" Jesuit Father Juan Ramon Moreno, now in his coffin, had told Bill, "Hear the Gospel from the point of view of the poor."

"I think," adds Bill, "that is why the Jesuits were killed."

Everything is a political act -- being poor or being rich. Mark's "Blessed are the poor" or Matthew's "Blessed are the poor in spirit." (Those with spiritual hunger, no matter what economic status) makes a life/death difference.

Also present at the funeral was Lutheran Bishop Medardo Gomez, often called "another Romero". Ron and Bill had moved out of the Bishop Gomez house they had rented -- after Gomez' office had been bombed several times. As they packed, Bill saw eight year old Veronica standing outside with her back to him. "She was

continued on p. 7

letter from a friend

Excerpted from a letter we recently received from a friend
volunteering with a church organization in San Salvador

One night I was at a peace vigil with about 14 of my co-workers. As it was a "legitimate" church sponsored event it was okay for me to go -- as opposed to if it had been a "political" event. (The problem here is that when you're talking about issues like peace, justice and oppressive governments it is not always black and white between what is legitimate church "business" and what is political!) Anyway, we were a peaceful group of about 2000 unarmed civilian participants. At one point when we were outside in the plaza across from the Cathedral the National Police (one of several armed government security forces -- and I use the term security very loosely!) began shooting at us. At first it was only a few single rifle shots. But shortly afterwards I saw 4 men carrying off a man who had been shot. It was horrible. Things calmed down after that for about a half-hour. But then the National Police began shooting at the crowd again (from about half a block away from my friends and me) only this time they were using automatic weapons. I am convinced that they were not necessarily trying to hit anyone. If they had been I'm afraid I would not be writing this letter today. I think they had one of two things in mind. They either wanted to incite something so they would have an excuse for shooting at us, or they wanted to intimidate us and scare us into leaving the vigil so it looked like there was no support for the sponsors. Anyway, the point I want to make by all of this is to show you the strength and commitment of these people. As you can imagine, after the second round of shooting quieted down we were more than a little nervous. People began running to the Cathedral and elsewhere for shelter. I'm sure this made the police very happy. But then the most incredible thing happened. The program sponsors came on the stage (there was a microphone there) and began addressing the crowd. They reminded us that we were a peaceful group of civilians at a legitimate church vigil. They reminded us that we were there for peaceful reasons and that we had every right to be there. And you know what? Most of the people who had run for the Cathedral came back to the plaza! Keep in mind that these were people who had friends and family members killed by such

A lot of people are still being pulled from their homes and questioned. As they are questioned, they are forced to remove their clothing, "which is so humiliating, it works on them psychologically."

The war could go on for a hundred years if your rockets keep coming, says Ron. His sister Gwen, director of Catholic Peace Ministry of Des Moines, has begged him to come home. More of his dozen brothers and sisters wish the same. But he thinks his people need him there.

Whatever optimism he holds for El Salvador's future rests with the United States, which must lay down ground rules before it provides more aid to Cristiani and the government. Says NCR, "It is past time for the American people to raise such an uproar that Congress will have to listen."

Since the 11th it has been hard to "do" anything. The government has clamped down on its repression of the churches and that goes for all us "church workers" too. We internationals are mostly lucky. They only deport us. Many Salvadoran church workers have been killed or tortured. Of course, you know about the Jesuits and the housekeeper and her daughter who were killed. Many churches have been forced to more or less close down or go "underground". For a while articles were coming out in the papers about all the international terrorists and if you saw a foreigner you should report them. Over half of the international "church workers" from the capital have been deported or have left under death threats. We spent several weeks more or less in hiding. We were afraid to even go out of the hotel for fear of being picked up and deported. Since this began I was first with the family, then I stayed in someone else's house, then we went back to the hotel, then back to the house, then back to the hotel for a couple weeks, then to a "guest house" and now I am in yet another hotel. It is not yet safe to go back to our house, and we are wondering if it ever will be. We are also unsure if it is safe to move to a new area where the neighbors don't know us and might report us. We are basically at a point of needing to evaluate everything -- what we will do and where we will live.

attacks. Many of them were people who narrowly escaped alive from such attacks. Yet so committed were they to their justice, that they returned. We were singing a popular Salvadoran song (actually it's from another country but has been adopted). There was such a sense of these people. It was probably one of the most moving experiences in my life.

So where am I now? As most of you probably know this country was shaken up on November 11, when the guerrillas launched a major offensive on the capital. This caused such strong emotions in me and has been an important present struggle for me in terms of my commitment to non-violence. Some ways I wonder if we really have to talk about the virtues of non-violence until we have lived through what the Salvadorans have lived through until we've seen our friends and family members and villages massacred. I believe that nothing will be solved by violence. But at the same time I can understand why so many here have decided to pick up a gun to defend their people. When the shooting began it was horrible, you've never heard a war before. It was a living nightmare. I have never heard such sounds. And with each noise I would think who was dying. Yet there was some pressure for the government (then in the US) to make some real changes. When the air force began bombing it was the same. They bombed civilians. They were not bombing guerrillas. But these civilians in poor areas which had been FMLN supporters so they were expendable. There were times I caught myself thinking I wish the helicopter would crash. Or I wish I would shoot that plane down. These pretty strong thoughts for someone who says she is committed to non-violence. Don't you think? Yet I can't deny that sometimes it's hard to remember that the people dropping the bombs are human beings, too. I have a lot of respect and admiration for the Japanese man I recently met with the pilot who flew the Grey, the plane that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima.

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"I have come (John 18:37)

I believe that and clarify the truth. Everything characterized by truth. They sought to make that truth. They sought the truth. They devoted the truth. They helped the truth. They Risen One. They solidarity of truth about of this little Salvador, a reality for brotherhood toward an would be a maintain the

Because the proclaimed finding, the many other Archbishop because the truth, which university, and their opening people favoring the organization foresee a future sisterhood. They looked rivers of hunger and asunder by violence which few have nothing.

Lovers of knew how necessary compromises demands a midst of a divides and reality. They knew that the po academic truth clear

A REMEMBRANCE

By Kay Meyer

The old guys in the alley called him Pedro. Another old Mexican with nowhere to go and no one to talk to. In his trenchcoat riding a ten speed bike, he moved alone, looking for something he knew he would never get back.

In his room he had painted every wall with spider webs. Someone told of a wife and daughter he had looked for for years. Was that what you were trying to catch in your webs, spiderman?

The gunshots, the yells, the man that lay in my back yard did not fit the man I knew as Raymond. The night went on and grew longer, people and police came and went, but the man laying in the snow was quiet.

As the years go by I wonder how I will remember Raymond. An old man with black eyes and smoky hair. He would sit, ever so still in our living room, watching the children dance, and not move a line on his face.

The newspaper said his name was Raymundo, but they didn't report the tears in the eyes of his friends. The newspaper stated his age as young, but they didn't report the years on the street. What could they say about a man whose past was lost and whose future laid with a handful of bullets and a piece in his coat?

The sleep I lost that night will not easily be regained. Sleep comes easier to those who trust that there is a sense of justice in the world, and my memory keeps telling me that there is not, there is not.

Blood lay on the snow in our yard, and the whole world seemed to freeze as we heard the sound of Raymond's friend sob, and sob, and sob.



POTTERY JAR, PANAMA



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I believe that these words of Jesus define
and clarify the death of our brother Jesuits.
Everything about their lives was
characterized by an ardent search for truth.
They sought the truth about God and tried to
make that truth accessible to people. They
sought the truth about humanity, and they
devoted themselves to discovering and
helping the world to see the seeds of the
Risen One present in the suffering and
solidarity of the poor. They sought the
truth about the world and about the reality
of this little part of the world called El
Salvador, and they sought to move this
reality forward on the road of justice,
brotherhood and sisterhood, dialogue, and
toward an open society where the poor
would be able to speak their word and
maintain their dignity.



Lovers of utopia, they were realists and
knew how to take the small steps that were
necessary. They never settled for
compromise. They knew how to make
demands and speak the truth even in the
midst of a civil war which polarizes and
divides and often hides basic elements of
reality. They knew how to defend life; they
knew that peace must be based on the rights
of the poor; and they spoke with an
academic rigor which made the light of
truth clearer and even more brilliant.

JAR, PANAMA



FOR THE MARTYRS OF EL SALVADOR

Homily of Fr. Jose Maria Tojeira, Jesuit Provincial of Central America,
at the funeral of the Jesuit Fathers assassinated at the Central America
University of San Salvador -- November 19, 1989

"I have come to give testimony to the truth."
(John 18:37)

Because they sought the truth and
proclaimed that part of the truth they were
finding, they were assassinated, like so
many others in El Salvador, like
Archbishop Romero. And they were killed
because that truth helped the poor. That
truth, which came out of their work in the
university, out of their personal testimony
and their prophetic denunciation, was
opening people's awareness and conscience,
favoring the consciousness-raising and
organization of the poor, and helping to
foresee a future of real brotherhood and
sisterhood in deeds and not only in words.
They looked toward a future without these
rivers of blood unjustly spilt, without
hunger and misery, without hearts ripped
asunder by the hatred, fear, mistrust, and
violence which are due to the fact that very
few have too much and too many have
nothing.

Can this world dominated by selfishness
destroy the dynamism of the Kingdom?
Can the testimony of the truth be killed?
Our faith in the Risen Lord tells us no. And,
if you will pardon this personal testimony,
my own experience, short as it is, as
provincial of the Society of Jesus in Central
America confirms for me that nothing and
no one can destroy the testimony of the
truth. That truth is not ours but is built
with the destroyed body and the shed blood
of Jesus Christ, united with the blood and
the destroyed bodies of those to whom the
Lord gives the grace to be witnesses to the
truth.

Their testimony to the truth has now been
sealed with blood in their death. This is the
last word which our brothers have spoken,
as a community, as martyrs. It has united
them to the immense chorus of so many
Salvadorans assassinated because of their
hunger and thirst for justice. The martyrs
are at the same time seed, flower, and fruit.
Their death, in the midst of the blood of the
people, has joined them to that suffering
face of the Lord Jesus which is seen today in
Latin America in the faces of the
margined of our cities, the peasants
without land, the indigenous people
without a voice, the children without hope,
the elderly who receive kindness from no
one, the persecuted and those killed because
they worked so that the gospel would
become life in our people. These faces have
been destroyed, without a doubt, by the
selfishness of a certain few, by the sin of
all, by the brutality of those who believe
that death is the solution for human
problems. All these faces destroyed are
symbolically represented by the faces of our
brothers destroyed by automatic-weapons
fire.

"My Kingdom is not of this world," said
Jesus, joining these words to his
commitment to the truth. Our brothers
worked for that Kingdom which is not built
by the selfishness predominant in this
world, in which three fourths of the
population goes hungry. They did not seek
honor, glory, position, but simply to serve.
They did not seek their own interests, but
they loved the suffering people of El
Salvador with all their heart, and they put
their own word and life at the service of
that people.

There is no Christian witness to the truth
without Eucharist. Our companions Elba
Ramos, Celina, Segundo Montes, Ellacuria,
Joaquín Lopez, Amando, Juan Ramon
Moreno, and Ignacio Martin-Baro are now
united to the Lord in death and in the spirit.
May our Eucharist become an intimate
communion and commitment in the Body
and the Blood of the Lord Jesus in whom
our brothers now live.

I can say today with pride that while the
same hatred which killed Archbishop
Romero was cutting down the lives of our
companions, our young Jesuit seminarians
were working in the provisional refugee
shelters of the archdiocese, accompanying
our brothers and sisters from the
neighborhoods which have been hit
especially hard by this war, gathering up
the dead and dying of both sides in the
midst of the madness of a struggle without
any truce. They were protecting children
and accompanying those fleeing from the
bullets of the combat zones, consoling those
who were losing their loved ones, staying at
the side of the poor. They have not killed
the Society of Jesus! They have not killed
the Jose Simeon Canas University [Central
America University].

The testimony of the truth continues. Love
is stronger than death. Our brothers have
worthy successors in the Society of Jesus
and among the lay people of the UCA
[Central America University], ready to
serve in the Church, in the University, in El
Salvador, always at the side of the poor and
united in courage and commitment to
Archbishop Romero, to so many good
priests who have gone before us with their
example, to so many unknown lay persons,
witnesses with their love and blood.

May so much testimony proclaimed in
blood become an urgent cry for peace. No to
death! No to war! No to injustice! Yes to the
love of the Beatitudes transforming the
structures of human relations! Yes to the
constant testimony, in life and word, of the
truth about God, about human beings, and
about the world in which we live!

San Salvador, Nov. 19, 1989
Auditorium of the Central America University

AROUND THE HOUSE

Even though Christmas has come and gone people keep coming around to the house, continually giving and helping us. Saying thank you doesn't always express our appreciation to those who go out of their way to share a part of themselves with those who have found themselves in a tight spot. It's not the gift that we appreciate as much as their presence. The message to us is that there is faith, love, and understanding here in middle America. That people are willing to come to us personally to meet, talk, and give to those needing a hand is a great sign of hope. And some of the friends we have met over the past few months really like it here and keep coming back.

The house has been continually full now for some time. A room that opens up doesn't stay empty for more than a day or two. We have a growing list of churches that bring us supper and those days when a church comes provide us a breather from our work load. We want to thank Evangelical Covenant and the Altoona Adventure Life-Reformed Church who have just started reaching out to us in this way.

Last December 8th the people of Des Moines got a real treat, George Bush came to town for a G.O.P. fundraiser. As I walked downtown and turned the corner, I was overwhelmed by the numbers of people that turned out to show their disapproval of government policies. The white crosses that bore the names of Salvadoran victims lined the skywalk as well as the street. There was a huge bloody-handed puppet of Uncle Sam, and I think the message that everyone brought with them got across.

Carol, Carla, Kay, Dennis, and Brian Terrell (from the Worker in Maloy) tried to get a personal message to President Bush and were arrested as they shouted "Stop the Repression in El Salvador" during Bush's speech. Their trial on the 4th of January was a real cliffhanger as the 5 of them defended themselves against the charges of disorderly conduct and simple assault. All 5 were found innocent of assault and guilty of disorderly conduct and were given deferred sentences.

Carla, Norman, and Kay (with a little help from our BVS'ers) ran the house the second week in January while Wendy, Carol and Corey took winter breaks. Wendy came back looking bright and refreshed. Corey came back with an illness that wouldn't loosen its grip and I think Carol should be nominated Clara Barton of the year.

As some of you know, four people in our community are fasting as we focus our attention on El Salvador. This is the tenth day of the fast and everyone is doing well. We have also been going to the Federal Building every Tuesday to leaflet, and Thomas has been organizing the big rally we're planning for February 17th at the Federal Building. We also know that if the US continues to give military aid to El Salvador we will also continue our resistance work.

announcements

housing demonstrations

Housing Now! continues this winter in a campaign from Christmas Day till Tax Day (April 15) in which activists from around the country are living on the streets in Washington DC while in their home communities fellow activists conduct similar demonstrations at the offices of their representatives or other symbolic locations. A group from Des Moines will be going to DC during the first week in April and local organizers are planning a cardboard box city here in Des Moines. For more information contact Carla Dawson at 243-0765 (DC group) or Bob Notman-Cook at 279-9998 (Des Moines group).

not a dime

The ad campaign urging a withdrawal of US aid to El Salvador is \$1500 short of the amount needed to place a full page ad in the Register. To help, contact Bill Douglas at 243-2571 or 274-4516.

central america week - mar.18-24

Worship service at St. Ambrose Cathedral, 6th & High, at 7:30 pm March 25. For information on other activities contact Bill Deutsch at 274-4851.

needs

laundry detergent
Lysol/Mr. Clean type cleaning supplies
coffee
eggs
breakfast cereal
dry beans and pasta
tomato products
towels
trash bags

thanks to Drake Newman

Last month Father David from the Drake Newman Center came to our house and shared Mass with us. It was so nice to get to know him and talk to him about the Newman Center. The Drake Newman Center has extended a very helpful hand to us and we certainly want to extend a special thanks to them. It would be a long list if I tried to write all the ways they have helped us out. As a group they have decided to support the Bishop Dingman House. This is a gesture to not only help those in need here in Des Moines, but as a way to show their appreciation to Bishop Dingman, who helped their community so much.

Some of the people from the Newman Center come around regularly on their own and help us out in innumerable ways -- Marie who coordinates the suppers, Margaret, who comes and gives the kids just that little bit of special attention, Ellen Robinson and Rita Schneider who have organized the effort to make the Dingman House an extra special place, and Barry who has been a part of our efforts for so long. A simple thank you is hardly enough. We really think of all these people as special friends, and everyone here appreciates what they have done for the community.

Last Saturday night (Feb. 3rd), Drake Newman held a chili supper fundraiser/linen shower for Dingman House. Those of us at the Worker who were able to go had a great time. It was an opportunity for us to sit and talk with folks we don't see as often. The gifts were much appreciated, almost as much as the thought and caring that went into them. It means so much to us to have these caring, supportive, friends.

for a special friend

Dear Margaret,

I'm giving you a special thanks, bringing Legos and other toys. Julius like to play with you. It's so nice that you can come. All the kids at the Worker really look forward to playing with you. You're our special friend.

From: Jann Haglan



THANKS

Well, as the person who writes the yours, I have to admit that I am so grateful that I don't know how I am ever going to be able to get a thank you written to everyone. So what I thought I'd do was take a little space and thank the churches who have been bringing us supper. Most of the groups bring us one meal a month. They bring the food in their homes or at their church and bring it to our house, put it on our table, and usually they stay and share supper with us. It is such a pleasure to have come to us and to talk to folks about our house. We have met so many neat people. We would like these groups to be a part of our community and we have no idea what we would be without them all.

Drake Newman Center
Indianola Presbyterian
Central Presbyterian
Covenant Presbyterian
Faith Lutheran
Urbandale United Church of Christ
Sisters of Humility
St. Mary of Nazareth
Our Lady's Immaculate Heart
Evangelical Covenant
Adventure Life Reformed
Holy Trinity

We also want to thank especially Houk, who took responsibility for the complete heating system installed at the Dingman House, (very much appreciated already by those of us living in the house this winter), and Jay Hiskey and Clark who worked on the plumbing. We have really appreciated the daily help of our dear friend Laura Robinson.

AND THANKS

The Catholic Worker community thanks those who gave and helped when we were in it most. I am in the community and have had some tough times. I could not have had some of those times like the time that so many kids that all day was a mess instead of at night like it always is. I can't remember times that there wasn't much food. The church brought some really good stuff the times we could not pay the bills. The worst of all. So we thank you a lot for helping and caring.

By Kenna Lee Meyer Haglan

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crying. She is not a real cuddly kid or anything. She is a street kid. But she put her head on my shoulder and wept. And I wept."

Would Veronica grow up to be one of the 13 year old guerrilla fighters?

Bishop Gomez, now in exile, was a little parishioner of then Father Oscar Romero. He wanted to be a priest -- "but the Catholics didn't want me. In those strict days, my parents weren't married in the Church." He went on to become a Lutheran Bishop, inspired still by his old pastor.

In Bill Schmidt's last letter, he gives a glimpse of life in a war zone:

"Padre, you forgot about the injection."

With these words, I awoke out of my half sleep. I vaguely recalled telling Ramona that I would give her the injection of vitamin B-12 the doctor had prescribed for her. The only problem was that I had never administered an injection before, although I had learned the theory in a practical nursing course I received several years ago here in San Salvador.

I got out a disposable needle and alcohol and took a look at the small bottle. Ron, who had dozed off, but he never lacks time, patience or interest for whatever concern I might have.

"Hey Ron," I called to him. "I'm going to give Ramona her injection. Any suggestions?"

"Well," Ron said, more asleep than awake, "I injected pigs back home in Iowa, but that was 40 years ago."

"Thanks, Ron."

I prepared the syringe.

After giving the shot, Ramona told me that it didn't hurt. I felt happy.

Ramona and her little daughter, Marisol, came to us after the earthquake of October 1986. We helped her build a tin shack. She would come to our house once a week to our extended family.

wash clothes. When the guerrillas' final offensive began on November 11, 1989, Ramona and Marisol were in their tin an AK-47." They turned to a group of Cristo Salvador parishioners peering out of a 'doorway'. "Do you know this priest?" "No," the frightened people said, and closed the door. Bill was frightened, too, but he went out to give blood before curfew.

Meantime, President Cristiani says, there is no persecution by the government or by the armed forces, of any religion. And a Bishop, head of the episcopal conference, went to Rome and told the Pope the same thing. And the U.S. government brainwashed the witness to the Jesuits' murders, declared Archbishop Rivera Damas, who has himself received threats.

"I guess Ramona is not the Church any more than the six dead Jesuit priests; and the fact that our church building was willfully destroyed by the armed forces after the fighting had subsided was just a mishap."

This 10 year old war has claimed 71,000 lives in tiny El Salvador. Even before the recent offensive, Ron and Bill were helping people out of difficulties. People under death threats had to leave the country. Some are threatened by the right, the death squads, army or police; others are in danger from the guerrillas. "There is no way I can get around such situations," says Ron.

For instance, when Herbert Anaya, a parishioner and president of the non-governmental human rights organization, was gunned down starting to take his children to school, there was international outcry to find the killers. So they grabbed a poor kid who had shot out the tires of a Pepsi Cola truck and tortured him until he "confessed". He has been in solitary confinement since. He asks to go to confession, but the pastor is not allowed to see him.

Last Corpus Christi, Ron had just started the evening Mass when a gun battle started outside. He wanted the people to get down on the floor during the Gospel. But, not wanting to offend God if they were in danger of death, they stayed standing. Ron rushed through the Mass, and they all got down on the floor for the next hour and a half. Bodies were left on the street all night and all the next day. One was a girl from the parish.

house. Like so many wild-eyed people in San Salvador today, they say, "The bullets from guns are one thing; the rockets and bombs from planes are another." Sheet metal does not stop bombs.

When they arrived at our house, like many others, they covered their faces and sobbed. Ramona now suffers from Bells' Palsy. Half her face fell paralyzed, her cheek and half her mouth sag and show little movement. Thus the medication. Marisol, who is nine, becomes hysterical when her mom talks about moving back to their shack.

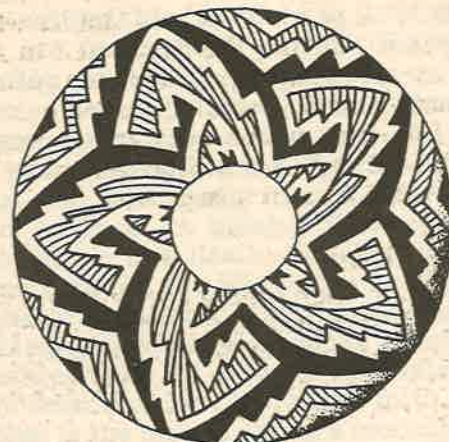
This is the true face of war here in El Salvador. I imagine that this is the face of war anywhere, including Panama. This is the face of war that most North Americans never see and don't seem to feel.

It was in November that the guerrillas attacked the First Infantry Brigade nearby, and US helicopters and gunships began striking the homes in the parish and dropping 500 pound bombs.

The young priest was weary from the days of helping parishioners and he was often caught in the 6:00 p.m. curfew, when one would be shot on sight if he stuck his head out the door. "We pile the mattresses on the top of the table to absorb the bullets. Then we will all get under it," he said then. People were afraid of machine guns coming through the plastic or plywood roof. Huddled together, they sang songs, prayed, tried to joke, laughing about anything they could, tensed and unleashed with the sound of the bombs -- "anything to keep from losing control." On the government radio station, someone read from the Bible, Romans 13:1 over and over. "To obey the army is to obey God."

During the day, says Bill, you always walk, never run, or you might be shot. (You might anyway.). One day he saw 12 year old Angela running hysterically from the bullets. It took him an hour to calm her.

The priests accompany the people back to their broken homes. They help carry possessions out of the house, carry food and medicines -- never guns. One day the camouflaged soldiers stopped Bill. "People say that you priests have been seen carrying



holy innocents actions

On December 28th as a part of the Holy Innocents observation organized by the New Covenant Peace and Justice Center in Omaha, Fr. Frank Cordaro and a dozen others crossed the line at the SAC base. Frank served 6 months for his last crossing and expects to be imprisoned again. His court date is March 26th -- contact the Worker to coordinate rides to his trial. After crossing at SAC, Frank and two others knelt and prayed in the driveway of an abortion clinic in Omaha and were arrested and charged with trespassing.

The Catholic Worker is a group of individuals living together in community and working together in pursuit of common goals of peace and justice. In our life together we are trying to live out the Biblical mandate to love one another, and so our houses are open to anyone in need, to stay on a temporary or occasionally a longterm basis.

The Catholic Worker is not a tax exempt organization. Members work as unpaid volunteers, receiving only room and board for our work. We neither seek nor accept government or foundation moneys of any kind, choosing to depend on gifts from our extended community who give at a personal sacrifice. In our refusal to conform to organizational structures, we affirm the responsibility of all to assume personal responsibility for those in need and for the problems facing us all in the world. We invite all to join us in whatever way you can.

MASS SCHEDULE

Fr. Swope will celebrate Mass on March 9 at 7:30 pm. Fr. Cordaro will celebrate Mass on March 16 at 7:30 pm, followed by a discussion on the Resistant Church. All are invited -- please come early and stay late.

Brothers, you . . . kill your own campesino brothers and sisters. And before an order to kill that a man may give, the law of God must prevail that says: Thou shalt not kill! . . . We want the government to take seriously that reforms are worth nothing when they come about stained with so much blood. In the name of God, and in the name of this suffering people whose laments rise to heaven each day more tumultuous, I beg you, I ask you, I order you in the name of God: Stop the Repression!

-Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero
from a speech on March 23, 1980

Via Pacis

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